

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.

10-10-08

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Otis Elevator Company Factory Building
Other names/site number _____

2. Location

Street & number 1435 W. Fifteenth Street/1501 S. Laflin Street not for publication _____
City or town Chicago vicinity _____
State Illinois code IL county Cook code 031
Zip code 60608

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Walter L. White / SHP 10-10-08
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Industry/Commerce</u>	Sub: <u>Manufacturing Facility</u>
	<u>Warehouse</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Work in Progress</u>	Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th/early 20th Revivals/Colonial Revival
Industrial

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Concrete
Roof: Asphalt
Walls: Masonry: Brick; Limestone
Other: _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Industry _____

Period of Significance 1900-1918

Significant Dates 1900
1906-1911
1916

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Samuel A. Treat and Abraham K. Adler, Architects (1900 building and 1906-1911 addition)
J. Norman Jensen, Architect (1916 addition)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>16</u>	<u>444960E</u>	<u>4634595N</u>	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Breiseth and Emily Ramsey, Associates

organization MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC date February 2008

street & number 30 W. Monroe St, Suite 400 telephone (312) 782-4577

city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60603

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Steve Lipe, Loomis-Laflin Lofts LLC c/o Lipe Property Company

street & number 1850 N. Milwaukee Avenue telephone (773)-489-9600

city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60647

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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SITE, SETTING AND LOCATION

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building is located on the southeast corner of West Fifteenth Street and South Laflin Street on Chicago's Near West Side, approximately three miles from the city center. Because of its location on a corner lot, the property has been historically identified by two addresses—1435 West Fifteenth Street and 1501 South Laflin Street. While under ownership of the Otis Elevator Company from 1900 to 1914, the building was commonly referenced by its Laflin Street address. After the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company purchased the property in 1914 and constructed additions to the property in 1916, 1435 West Fifteenth Street became the building's primary address. For the purposes of this report, 1435 West Fifteenth Street will be used as the primary address of the Otis Elevator Company Factory Building.

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building was originally one of four facilities that comprised the Otis Elevator Company Chicago Works. The four facilities (three of which are extant) were situated on corner lots at the intersections adjacent to the Baltimore and Ohio Chicago Terminal (B&O CT) railroad tracks. The four Chicago Works buildings occupied the southwest corner of West Fifteenth and Laflin streets, the southeast corner of West Fifteenth and Laflin streets, the southwest corner of West Sixteenth and Laflin streets, and the southeast corner of West Sixteenth and Laflin streets (no longer extant). With the exception of the building on the southwest corner of West Fifteenth Street and Laflin Street, which was originally constructed by the Standard Elevator Company, all of these buildings were built by the Otis Elevator Company during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building at 1435 West Fifteenth Street is presently located directly south of Addams Park and directly north of the former B&O CT Railroad tracks, which are currently owned by Union Pacific.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Initial construction of the Otis Elevator Company Factory Building began in 1900. The present-day structure is the result of multiple building campaigns. The first structure erected on the site was a five-story brick factory on the southeast corner of West Fifteenth Street and South Laflin Street. Designed for the Otis Elevator Company by architects Samuel A. Treat and Abraham K. Adler and constructed under the direction of contractor George Swift, the five-story, flat-roofed factory building had a structural system of timber-framing and load-bearing masonry walls of six-course American-bond brick. A limited area in the southwest portion of the building has a structural system of clay tile columns and a clay tile ceiling. Round steel columns are also located in the southwest portion of the building. Each floor plan is characterized by large open spaces with an exposed structural system and limited partition walls. Existing interior partition walls are limited to the walls that define each area constructed during the different building campaigns as well as those that enclose stairwells, elevator shafts, and define restrooms.

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An exterior-side canted brick chimney (smoke chute) abuts the north elevation of the original building. The chimney no longer has its original corbelled cap. A water tower situated adjacent to the chimney was constructed between 1900 and 1906. The structure frame of the water tower is still intact. The original building was six bays wide along West Fifteenth Street (north elevation) and eight bays deep along South Laflin Street (west elevation). A corbelled brick cornice, indicative of the Colonial Revival style, adorns the original building.

The north elevation originally featured a combination of tripled and paired 15/15 double-hung, wood-sash windows. The west elevation was punctuated with paired 15/15 double-hung, wood-sash windows. The first story fenestration on both elevations consisted of 10/10 double-hung, wood-sash windows and double-leaf wood doors. All windows on the west and north elevations were set on limestone lug sills and featured rowlock brick lintels (Figure 1). Over time many of these windows have been replaced with either 2/2 wood-sashes or glass blocks. Several window openings have been modified with brick infill to accommodate smaller windows. The pedestrian entrance on the west elevation has been entirely filled with brick; the former entrance has a limestone Colonial Revival-style door surround dating to circa 1916. The rear (south) elevation of the building, which runs parallel to the railroad tracks, is punctuated with single and paired window openings. Some openings along this elevation retain their original wood-sash windows.

Some time between 1906 and 1911 a three-story addition of masonry construction with structural timber framing was constructed along the West Fifteenth Street elevation. Nineteen bays in width, the addition abuts the east elevation of the original structure. The addition's brick is laid in a six-course American bond, matching the bonding of the original structure. Fenestration along the north elevation of the addition consists of single window openings, some of which retain 12/12 double-hung, wood-sash windows. A handful of window openings have 12/2 double-hung, wood-sash replacement windows or are covered with plywood. Original windows openings along the east elevation of the addition are brick-filled.

In 1916, two major additions were constructed nearly doubling the size of the building. First, an additional two stories were added to the 1906-1911 three-story addition. The westernmost bay of the addition was increased to six stories to serve as a stair tower; the stair tower also housed an elevator shaft. The stair tower has limestone coping and limestone panels framing the windows openings on the fifth and sixth stories. A new, central pedestrian entrance was created on the first story of the stair tower. The entrance has a Colonial Revival-style limestone surround. The engraved, beveled limestone lintel reads "RILEY SCHUBERT GROSSMAN CO." The entrance originally held a double-leaf door; brick infill has reduced the size of the entrance to hold a single-leaf metal door. The additional two stories featured fenestration patterns and brick bonding consistent with the lower three stories. Window openings have 1/1 aluminum-sash replacement windows or are covered with plywood. Window openings have limestone sills. A corbelled brick cornice, similar to the cornice of the original structure, adorns the addition.

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A second addition dating to 1916 was constructed along the rear portion of the property. The three-story, flat-roofed addition abuts the original structure as well as the addition along West Fifteenth Street. The rear elevation addition is also masonry construction with a structural timber frame. Consistent with the rest of the plant, the brick is laid in a six-course American bond. Original fenestration patterns along the rear (south) and side (east) elevation of the addition were composed of paired wood-sash windows. Windows on the east elevation have brick infill, while several windows on the south elevation have been modified to hold larger windows or feature replacement sashes.

Despite these large additions, the original five-story building designed by Treat & Adler and constructed in 1900 continues to read as the main block of the expanded, present-day structure.

INTEGRITY

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building retains its integrity as a turn-of-the-twentieth-century industrial building. The present-day building is the result of three major building campaigns that occurred in 1900, 1906-1911, and 1916, which is typical of industrial structures that are modified over time to address the changing needs of occupants and technological advancements. The building is composed of two five-story sections abutting each other and a three-story section along the rear elevation; the configuration of the additions created a courtyard in the western portion of the building. Minor exterior alterations, limited to the replacement of windows and doors, have occurred throughout the building's lifespan. The replacement of windows and doors is a common alteration and does affect the overall architectural integrity of the building. The majority of replacement windows have aluminum sashes, although the building has replacement windows with wood sashes that are more than fifty years old. Glass block was installed in some window openings on the north and west elevations, while other openings were infilled with brick. A few window openings do not have sashes and are covered with plywood. Original windows have been retained along the south (rear) elevation and the north (façade) elevation of the 1916 addition. The double-leaf entrance along West Fifteenth Street has been modified to accommodate a single-leaf door, while the west elevation entrance has been infilled with brick. Loading docks with overhead metal doors were installed on both the west and east elevations of the building during the mid-twentieth century as the loading docks on the second story of the south (rear) elevation went out of use. Although its setting has changed over time, the Otis Elevator Company Factory Building retains its integrity of feeling, association, location, design, materials, and workmanship.

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SUMMARY

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building at 1435 West Fifteenth Street in Chicago is significant at the local and state levels under Criterion A for its association with the Otis Elevator Company's expansion into the Midwest market at the beginning of the twentieth century. The building, initially constructed in 1900 and expanded by Otis in 1906-1911 and by subsequent owners Riley-Shubert-Grossman Company in 1916, was the first purpose-built facility constructed by the Otis Elevator Company as part of their campaign to establish a major presence in Chicago. At the time of the building's construction, the Otis Elevator Company was the largest producer of elevators in the United States. The building's location in the thriving industrial area of Chicago's Near West Side was ideal for the transportation of products among the many Otis Works scattered throughout the country. Four major transportation routes—the Southwestern Plank Road (now Ogden Avenue), the Illinois and Michigan Canal, the Burlington Railroad, and Lincoln Highway (now Roosevelt Road)—provided easy access to and from the area. This proximity to major transportation routes would be vital during the building's second incarnation as a warehouse for the Riley-Schubert-Grossman mail order company, under whose ownership during the mid-1910s the building was expanded to its present form.

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building is also noteworthy architecturally as a utilitarian example of the large, early 20th century, rail-oriented manufacturing and warehouse buildings which once dominated the extensive factory district of Chicago's Near West Side. Since its initial construction in 1900, the building has continually served as a factory or warehouse. The structure retains its essential character as a large warehouse building and serves as a visual landmark in the neighborhood.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

THE OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY

The Otis Elevator Company, which would become the largest and most well-known elevator company in the world by the turn of the century, was founded by Elisha Graham Otis, a Vermont native and gifted mechanic. Although his early years were plagued by ill health and failed business ventures, Otis' luck changed in 1845 when he moved to Albany, New York to work as the master mechanic for a bedstead factory. During his time with O. Tingley & Company, Otis invented a railway safety brake and several other devices to improve the efficiency of the production of metal bed frames. By 1852, he had moved to Yonkers, New York to install machinery for another bedstead company, Maize & Burns. While installing a hoist that would lift heavy equipment to the factory's upper floor, Otis devised a safety device—comprised of a steel wagon spring meshed with a ratchet—that would catch and hold the hoist in place if the rope gave way. Recognizing the potential in his invention, Otis went into business selling his new "safety" elevator the following year. His business card boasted that "Otis' Life-Saving Steam Elevators are so

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constructed that if the rope breaks the platform cannot fall... Twelve men killed in this city [Yonkers, N. Y.] within four years with the old kind, and not one killed or hurt with Otis' Excelsior Elevators."¹ Otis sold only three of his safety elevators between 1853 and early 1854. A dramatic demonstration of Otis' safety brake at the Crystal Palace Exposition in New York City in May of 1854, during which the inventor himself ascended in an elevator and allowed the cable to be cut with an axe, brought national attention to the E. G. Otis Company and convinced the general public that elevators were safe to use.

Elisha Otis died of diphtheria in 1861. His two sons, Charles and Norton, took over operation of their father's company and incorporated as Otis Brothers & Company in 1867. The company completed a new \$13,000 factory building in Yonkers in 1868. That same year, the Otis Brothers also completed work on a new steam powered passenger elevator with a half dozen additional safety devices and an enclosed cab. It was this new version of the Otis elevator that would help transform America's urban landscape during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as architects and builders began to experiment with tall buildings.

THE OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY IN CHICAGO

The passenger elevator was particularly important in the architectural history of Chicago, which emerged in the late-19th century as a world leader in architecture and cutting edge building construction technologies. Beginning in the 1880s, Chicago engineers and architects developed new structures with deep foundations and steel skeletons that allowed buildings to reach unprecedented heights. Leading Chicago architects William LeBaron Jenney, Burnham & Root, and Holabird & Roche designed the world's first skyscrapers, which transformed urban landscapes by making possible the vertical concentration of office and living spaces. The elevator industry, which had previously been limited primarily to industrial applications that involved the efficient movement of freight and other heavy goods within multi-storied factory buildings, took on a new important role—the transportation of people—with the advent of the skyscraper. Passenger elevators like the one developed by Otis were instrumental in providing easy access to the upper floors of skyscrapers, allowing building owners to charge equivalent or higher rental rates for upper stories which had previously been less desirable rental space. For Otis Brothers & Company, Chicago represented a potentially lucrative market with a booming construction industry that specialized in tall structures requiring passenger elevators.

By the beginning of the 1890s, Otis Brothers & Company had grown into one of the most successful elevator companies in the world. The company established sales offices in London and Paris in 1884, and during the 1880s and early 1890s, Otis elevators were installed in the Eiffel Tower, the London Underground Railroad, the Glasgow Harbor Tunnel, the Kremlin, Balmoral Castle, the Hungarian Royal Palace, and in numerous office and apartment buildings throughout Europe. Otis next turned to the American Midwest. In 1893, the Otis Brothers aggressively

¹ "Otis: A Visual Timeline," from <http://www.otisworldwide.com/d31-timeline.html>.

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targeted the Columbian Worlds Exposition to advertise their equipment and increase their presence in Chicago. Otis elevators were installed in the Exposition's Transportation Building (eight hydraulic and three electric elevators), Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building (four electric elevators), Casino (three hydraulic elevators and two direct hydraulic dumbwaiters), and the Administration Building (eight electric elevators). Otis elevators in the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building carried hundreds of thousands of passengers to the rooftop observation platform. In all, twenty-eight Otis units were installed for the Exposition. In addition, the company maintained a "World's Fair Office" in the Transportation Building.

At the time of the Columbian Exposition, Chicago was home to several successful elevator manufacturers, including the Crane Elevator Company, the Hale Elevator Company, the Smith-Hill Elevator Company and the Standard Elevator Company. The Crane Elevator Company was one of the largest elevator manufacturers in the United States during the last decades of the nineteenth century, selling elevators throughout the United States and abroad. The Hale Elevator Company, acting as agents for the sale of Otis Brothers elevators, had a contemporaneous presence with the Crane Elevator Company in Chicago. Both companies used the various patented Otis safety devices in their elevators. Several Crane elevators were used for the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Although the bulk of Crane's business was the manufacture of steam and hydraulic elevators, the company also produced their own car enclosures. By 1895, the Crane Elevator Company had grown to forty-five employees and expanded further by purchasing the Hale Elevator Company. The Crane Elevator Company operated from a plant located at 219 South Jefferson Street in Chicago, while Hale maintained an office and shop in the basement of the Rialto Building in Joliet, Illinois. The Standard Elevator Company, a smaller concern than both Crane and Hale, occupied a plant situated on the southwest corner of Laflin and Fifteenth streets on the west side of Chicago.

In 1898, Otis Brothers & Company merged with fourteen existing elevator companies to form the Otis Elevator Company. The newly established Otis Elevator Company, now unquestionably the largest elevator manufacturer in the world, set up an office in Chicago to represent their Midwestern and western interests, which had previously been handled by Hale Elevator. The new Otis Elevator Chicago Works merged three existing local elevator companies—the Crane Elevator Company, Smith-Hill Elevator Company, and Standard Elevator Company. The board of Otis' Chicago office included former Chicago Mayor John A. Roach (vice president), former secretary and treasure of the Smith-Hill Elevator Company C.C. Comstock (vice president and sales manager), and E.A. Russell (treasurer).

Initially, the Otis Elevator Company utilized the former Standard Elevator plant at the southwest corner of South Laflin Street and West Fifteenth Street for manufacturing and assembly, and the company moved additional equipment acquired from the merger with the Smith-Hill and Crane companies to the Standard facility. Although the plant itself was not sufficient to meet Otis' expanding needs, its location on the southern end of Chicago's Near West Side—a rapidly developing industrial neighborhood with easy access to rail, water, road transportation, and an immigrant labor force—was ideal. Otis constructed a three-story addition to the Standard building in early 1900, but

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the company moved quickly when the opportunity came to construct a new factory directly across Laflin Street from the existing plant they had inherited. Building permits were issued to the Otis Elevator Company in August of 1900 for the construction of a new facility with three supporting outbuildings at the southeast corner of West Fifteenth Street and South Laflin Street. These new facilities were the first purpose-built buildings for the Otis Elevator Company in Chicago.

The first building permit was issued on August 1, 1900, for the construction of a five-story factory. The factory, noted to be of brick construction, was estimated to cost \$42,000. On August 18, 1900, a second permit was issued for the construction of three smaller facilities in the lots adjacent to the five-story factory. The three structures, indicated to all be two stories in height, were described as a blacksmith shop, a warehouse, and a power hopper. The factory and the three outbuildings flanked one another, giving the appearance of one large facility (Figure 2). The three outbuildings were estimated to cost \$19,000. The 1914 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* described the buildings as a warehouse, a storeroom, a machine shop, woodworking, and a hammer shop (Figure 3).

The architects for the original 1900 portion of the Otis factory were the Chicago firm of Treat & Adler. Samuel Atwater Treat (1839-1910) was an important post-Fire Chicago architect noted for designs of large industrial plants as part of the firm Treat & Foltz. Abraham K. Adler (1873-1914), the eldest son of eminent Chicago architect Dankmar Adler (1844-1900), entered his father's practice in 1894 following graduation from the University of Michigan with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Following the elder Adler's death in April 1900, Treat and Adler formed their partnership. Noted the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on May 13, 1900: "Samuel A. Treat and Abraham K. Adler have formed the firm of Treat & Adler, and will continue the business of the late Dankmar Adler".² The firm ultimately dissolved in 1902, but during the two years of their practice, Treat & Adler were responsible for the following projects, among others: a plant for the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company (1900); an addition to Chicago's Standard Club (1901); the Ravisloe Country Club at Homewood (1901); a factory for the American Hide & Leather Company factory (1901); and a factory for Jos. Beifeld & Co. (1901).

George B. Swift (1845-1912), who acted as general contractor for the new Otis factory, was also a well known Chicago businessman and politician. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1845, Swift moved to Chicago after high school to make his way as a businessman. He founded the George B. Swift and Company, which manufactured Imperial Axel Grease and Swift's Tallow Compound. In addition to his career in manufacturing, Swift was elected as Alderman of Chicago's Eleventh Ward in 1877—a position he would hold until 1885—and served as the Commissioner of Public Works from 1887 to 1889. Upon his resignation from the post, the *Chicago Tribune* praised Swift as "an energetic, capable, and faithful public servant [...] that has introduced many commendable reforms during his too brief term of office."³

² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 13, 1900.

³ "Commissioner Swift's Resignation" *Chicago Daily Tribune* January 12, 1889:4.

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Swift returned to politics in 1892 after a brief hiatus; he successfully ran a third time for Alderman. In 1893, he was nominated to serve as acting mayor of Chicago by the Republican Aldermanic Caucus following the assassination of the recently elected Republican Mayor Carter Henry Harrison. At the time Swift was elected acting mayor, he was also the vice president and general manager of the Frazer Axle Grease Company. Swift's nomination was unanimous and he officially assumed the post of mayor on November 6, 1893 just days after the close of the Columbian Exposition. Although he was narrowly defeated by John P. Hopkins in the 1893 mayoral election, he ran successfully in 1895 and served one two-year term. Francis Eastman, author of the 1916 *Chicago Manual*, declared that, despite all his years in politics and his successful manufacturing concerns, George Swift was "best known as the head of a firm of building contractors, whose work, so far from being local to this city, was done in many of the States of the Northwest."⁴ The Otis factory on the southeast corner of Laflin and Fifteenth streets is a rare example in Chicago of George B. Swift's work as a contractor.

By 1906, the Otis Elevator Company held controlling interests in nearly thirty companies involved in the manufacture of freight and passenger elevators and was manufacturing and selling approximately 80 percent of all elevators used in the United States. Consequently, a suit was brought against the Otis Elevator Company under the Sherman anti-trust laws. The suit alleged the elevator companies had created an amalgamation in order to control and enhance the prices at which elevators were sold. The "merger" of these elevator companies was accomplished through Otis Elevator Company's purchase of either the whole or a majority stock interest in each of the businesses; although the companies continued to appear to operate as separate and independent concerns, the suite alleged Otis had controlling stakes in each of the companies. Otis argued, successfully, that their corporation had the right to indirectly restrain trade, fix exorbitant rates, and drive out competition because they held legal patents on many of the components used in building the modern elevator. Attorney Paul Brown told the court that, although "officials of the company may admit that they have a monopoly of the elevator business... this admission does not place them in violation of the Sherman law" because the elevator industry monopoly was a "monopoly of patents."⁵ Essentially, no company or individual in the United States could install or construct an elevator without violating a patent held by the Otis Elevator Company.

The defeat of the anti-trust claim allowed the Otis Elevator Company to continue to expand its operations in Chicago. The company had already purchased a large tract on the south side of the B&O CT Railroad track in 1902 and erected an extensive foundry on the site, which was expanded in 1906. The company also constructed a substantial three-story brick addition to the Treat & Adler factory building, which extended west along West Fifteenth Street from the east end of the original building. The Otis Elevator Company built the last building in its west side "Chicago Works" complex—a pattern warehouse—in 1910. The construction of an impressive office

⁴ Eastman, Francis A. *Chicago Manual 1916*. Chicago: Bureau of Statistics, 1916:204.

⁵ "Elevator Trust Finds a Loop Hole" *Chicago Daily Tribune* March 9, 1906:7.

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building to serve as Otis's Western headquarters was the final component of the company's Chicago building campaign. W.D. Baldwin of New York, president of the Otis Elevator Company, and E.A. Russell of Chicago, vice president and treasurer of the company, purchased land at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Jefferson Street in September of 1911. Renowned Chicago architect Daniel H. Burnham designed the building, which officially opened in 1912.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Otis's Chicago office served as the headquarters for operations in twenty-two states, from Florida to Louisiana and west to Colorado and Utah. In 1910, Otis's peak sales year, the Chicago plant sold 3,200 elevators. Otis was also manufacturing elevators in the plants of every company in which it held a controlling interest. Thus, Otis had nine U.S. plants in operation by 1912: Yonkers, Harrison, Buffalo, Chicago, Quincy, Moline, Peru, Houston, and San Francisco. At the same time, Otis continued to expand its international operations. Between 1902 and 1912 the company established subsidiaries in Canada, England, and Belgium; opened new plants in France and Germany; formed relationships with new agents in Austria-Hungary, Holland, Russia and Spain, and opened a branch office in Scotland.

Early in 1911, Otis moved its construction department and the drafting room from the Chicago Works facilities to Michigan Avenue. A machinist strike occurred the same year, with the shop men walking out in sympathy. The 1911 strike has a prominent place in Otis history as the last incident of labor troubles. The strike settlement brought the Elevator Construction Union into existence, which brought "harmony to the entire organization."⁶ Soon afterward, Otis announced a reorganization of the company that established a new system of decentralized zones across the country. Employees were given the opportunity to accept positions in the new zones, which included Cleveland, Omaha, Texas, Atlanta, and San Francisco. The new zone system did not terminate the Otis presence in Chicago, but it did spell the end of the company's manufacturing operations within the city. The last elevators constructed at the Chicago Works were completed in May 1914, and the plant officially closed on May 23, 1914.

The Otis Company Factory Building at 1435 West Fifteenth Street was the first building Otis sold after the Chicago Works closed in 1914. The company retained ownership of the other buildings in the complex through the 1910s. These buildings were re-tooled and reopened in 1917 to manufacture munitions for World War I. Once the war was over, the Otis Company sold these other properties to various manufacturing concerns. The former Standard Elevator Company building at the southwest corner of West Fifteenth and South Laflin Streets was sold to the Chicago Fuse Manufacturing Company, which extensively remodeled the building for its own use. The foundry property at the southeast corner of Ashland Avenue and West Sixteenth Street was sold to the Maremont Manufacturing Company, which use the building in the production of springs for automobiles. The building at the southeast corner of West Sixteenth Street and South Laflin was also sold, and was demolished at some point after 1920.

⁶ *Early Otis Chicago History* May 1939, from the archives of Otis Elevator Company, p.11.

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THE RILEY-SCHUBERT-GROSSMAN COMPANY

In addition to being the first purpose-built facility constructed by the Otis Elevator Company, the factory building at 1435 West Fifteenth Street is also significant for its subsequent association with the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company—"wholesalers to consumers"—under whose brief ownership the building assumed its current configuration and appearance as a large warehouse and distribution center for the company's mail order business. William Seymour purchased the property on the southeast corner of West Fifteenth and Laflin streets from the Otis Elevator Company in June of 1916, two years after the factory had officially closed its doors. At the time of sale, the property, which measured 264 feet on the north front and 124 feet on the west front, housed, in addition to the five-story factory with three-story east addition, several other supporting structures, including a machine shop, woodworking shop, and a hammer shop. The property also boasted switch track connections to the B & O C.T. Railroad tracks, located along the southern edge of the tract.

Seymour leased the property to the Riley-Schubert Grossman Company, a thriving Chicago mail order house. Founded by entrepreneur Samuel M. Grossman, the firm was in business by 1914 and operated a store at 1401-1417 West Jackson Boulevard. The Riley-Schubert-Grossman mail order company was established in an era where millions of American purchased goods through the mail, and the industry had established itself as a major sector of the American economy. The mail order industry was a thriving business arena from the 1870s through the 1920s, following the establishment of Aaron Montgomery Ward's 1872 mail-order company. Chicago dominated the mail order business, which consisted of selling directly to consumers across the country using catalogs and mail deliveries. Montgomery War and Sears, both Chicago based firms, led the early mail order industry. Both firms became large enterprises through catalog sales long before they opened retail stores. The heyday of the mail order industry occurred between the 1890s and the 1910s. In 1913, Montgomery Wards was selling approximately \$40 million dollars a year in goods, while Sears, which maintained branches in Dallas and Seattle, annual sales had surpassed \$100 million dollar. By the early part of the twentieth century, the mail order industry had established itself as a major component of the American economy through which millions of rural consumers purchased goods.⁷ The phenomenal profits of Chicago-based mail order concerns such as Montgomery Ward and Sears likely prompted Samuel Grossman to establish the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company in 1914 in hopes of cashing in on the ever-expanding industry.

A full-page advertisement for the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* on October 22, 1916, declaring the company was "America's Fastest-Growing Mail Order Dept. Store," having increased their capital from \$100,000 in 1914 to five million dollars in 1916. The advertisement also declared that "business history does not record a more flowing page than that written by the concern Mr. Grossman has founded and now

⁷ "Mail Order" <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/779.html>

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directs. But the past is only a prediction of what the future is bound to be” (See Figure 5). That same year, the firm announced construction of a “monster plant” for the firm’s new mail order-only format; henceforth the firm would only accept catalog orders submitted by mail and accompanied by cash. The new construction, rather than replacing the existing five-story Otis building, expanded the building to the east and south and added a stair tower at the seam between the old and new construction on West 15th Street. The designer of the 1916 addition by the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company was J. Norman Jensen (1880-1949), a local architectural engineer who received his degree in civil engineering from the University of Illinois in 1906. Jensen was a published expert in the design of reinforced concrete buildings and served as Architectural Engineer for the City of Chicago’s Building Department from about 1910 to 1915. In that role he developed the “Chicago Flat-Slab Designing Regulations,” which were widely adopted elsewhere as a standard for the design and construction of girder-less slab construction.

In October of 1917, the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company officially purchased the newly improved factory from William Seymour. Only a few months later, the company was revealed to be in serious financial trouble. In July of 1918, purchasers of stock in the mail order company went to federal court to petition for bankruptcy. The company had represented themselves as a five million dollar concern, but it was found they had only \$25 in cash on hand, accounts receivable totaling \$125 and merchandise worth approximately \$1,000. Furthermore, stockholders alleged the company was doing \$1,000 of business a month while simultaneously losing \$4,000 a month; during this time it was suspected that Grossman was paying himself a salary of \$15,000 a year. Stockholders further charged that Grossman had used the company’s name to suggest that there were three equal partners in the business, when there was in fact only one. The “Schubert” in the company’s name was Grossman’s sister-in-law, who had no actual involvement in the company, and “Riley” was the name of Grossman’s bulldog.

On the evening of July 17, 1918, Samuel M. Grossman and Ashur J. Goldfine, a colleague of Grossman’s in the mail order industry, were arrested for fraud. The subsequent investigation found that the men were involved in four businesses: the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company, Merchants and Manufacturers’ Company of America, Service Motor Supply Company, and the People’s Security Company. Records seized from the companies revealed that Grossman and Goldfine had sold stock for these other companies in the sum of 1.25 million dollars. It was also uncovered that 30,000 people had sent money to the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company and never received their goods.⁸ The case went to trial on May 17, 1920 before Judge Carpenter. Samuel M. Grossman, David Grossman, Ascher J. Goldfine, and Hyman Himmelstein were tried for a \$3,000,000 fraud charge in connection with the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company. Of the defendants, only Samuel M. Grossman was found guilty; the rest were acquitted. By the time the trial had concluded, the company’s property at West Fifteenth and South Laflin Streets had been sold at auction. (See Figure 6).

⁸ “Mail Financiers Spend Night in County Jail” *Chicago Daily Tribune* July 17, 1918:13.

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Subsequent tenants of the building included the United Cigar Stores Company, founded in 1901 by George and Charles Whelan, who leased space in the building from 1919 until 1932. During that period, the United Cigar Stores Company had a nationwide presence—operating more than 2,200 stores and agencies in more than 1,000 cities—and was the largest chain of cigar stores in the United States. The company occupied the first through third floors and used the building as a warehouse and distribution center. From 1938 to 1994, Berman Brothers, Inc.—one of the oldest and largest producers of bottles, jars, and other glass containers in the Midwest—leased or owned the building.

Despite physical alterations over time (primarily to door and window openings), the Otis Elevator Company Factory Building retains integrity of feeling, association, location, design, materials, and workmanship. The building meets National Register Criterion A and is significant at the local and state levels under the themes of industry and engineering. The period of significance extends from 1900, when the building was initiated by the Otis Elevator Company, to 1918 when it was sold by the Riley-Schubert-Grossman Company, under whose ownership it achieved its current design and configuration. The building is significant for its association with the Otis Elevator Company as the company's first purpose-built facility in the Midwest. The building's subsequent association with the Riley-Shubert-Grossman Company mail order business is also significant for Chicago's preeminence in this period as the nation's mail order capital.

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building, constructed in 1900, was the first purpose-built plant constructed by and for the Otis Elevator Company in Chicago, signaling the company's physical entrance into the Midwest market. Otis Elevator maintained the building as a production facility until 1914. In 1914, Otis stopped production in the building and sold the lots as well as their leasehold interest on the property; Otis, however, took the property's mortgage back and retained an interest in the property until 1943. Thus, the plant was the first constructed for the Otis Chicago Works and the Chicago Works building Otis maintained ownership of the longest.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Otis Elevator Company Factory Building is bounded on the north West Fifteenth Street and to the west by South Laflin Street. The former B&O CT railroad tracks (presently owned by CSX Transportation, successor the B&O Railroad) create the southern boundary of the property. Lot 003 of parcel 127 creates the eastern boundary of the property.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Since its construction in 1900, the Otis Elevator Company Factory Building has been associated with parcel 127 and lot 001. The recognized legal boundary of the property includes the 32,562 square foot lot, 32,488 square feet of which are improved.

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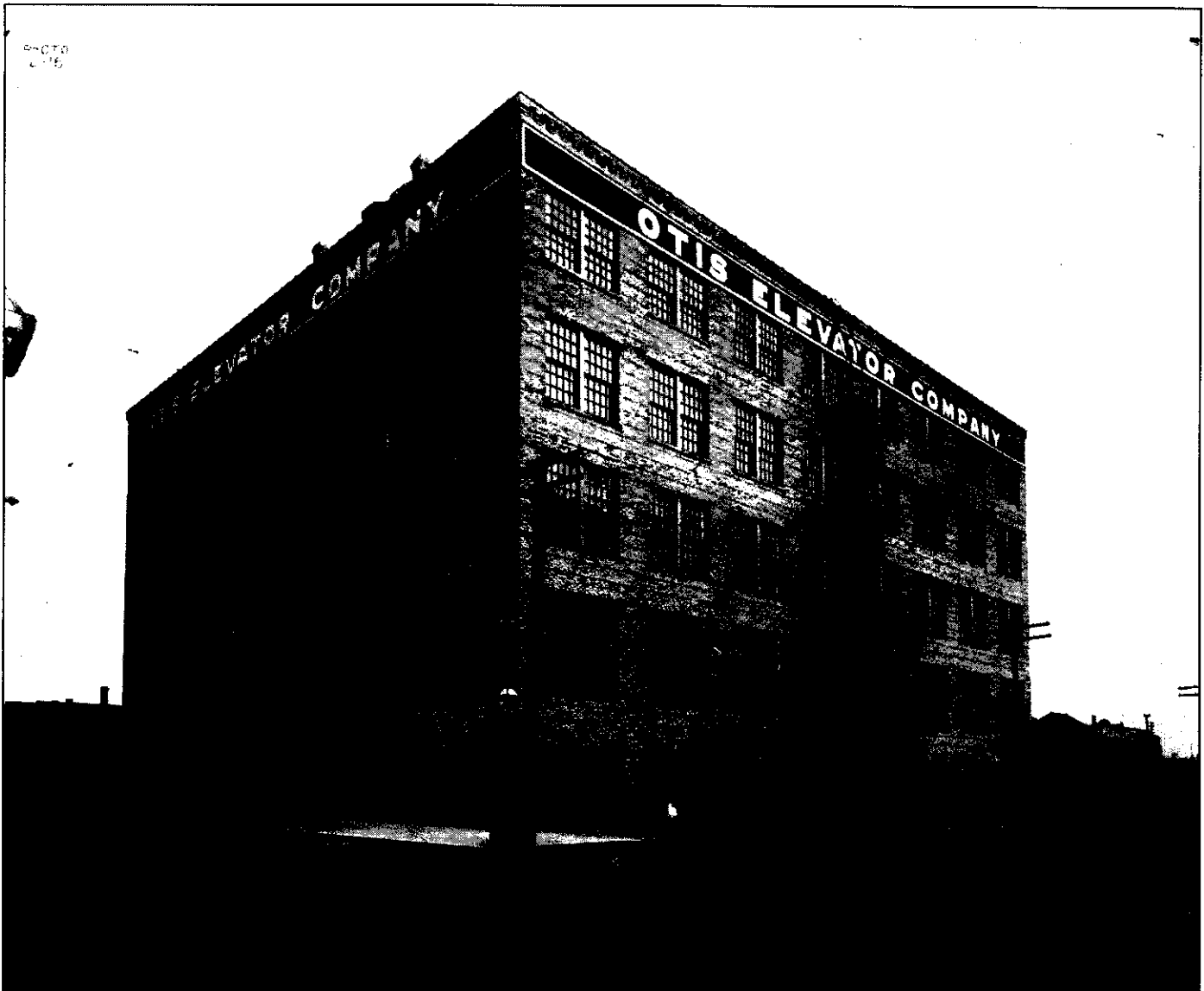


Figure 1: Looking southeast toward the Otis Elevator, Chicago Works factory building on the southeast corner of West Fifteenth and South Laflin streets, circa 1906 *from the Otis Elevator Company Archives*

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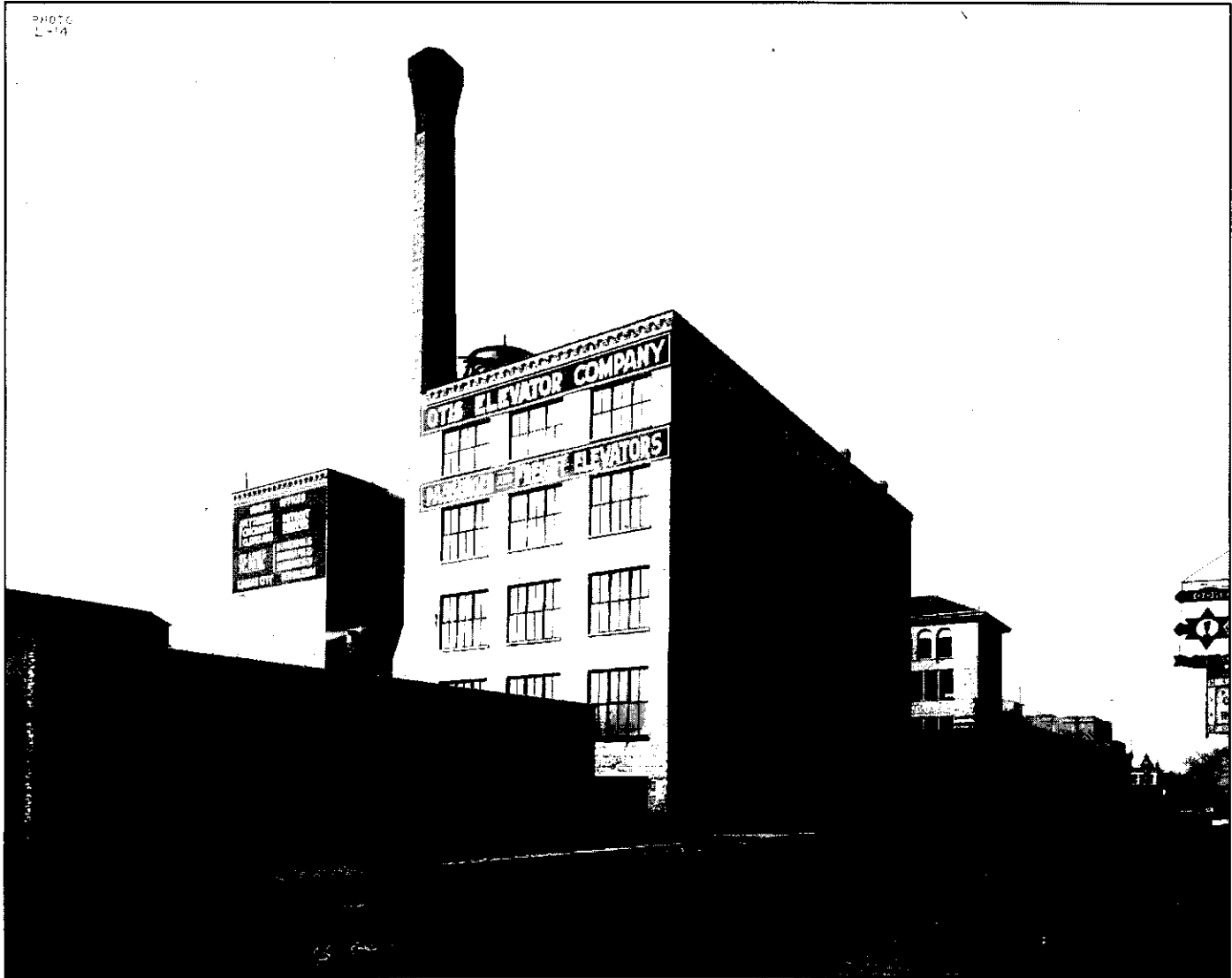


Figure 2: Looking south toward the rear elevation of the Otis Elevator Company, Chicago Works Building at 1435 West Fifteenth Street, circa 1906 *from the Otis Elevator Company Archives*

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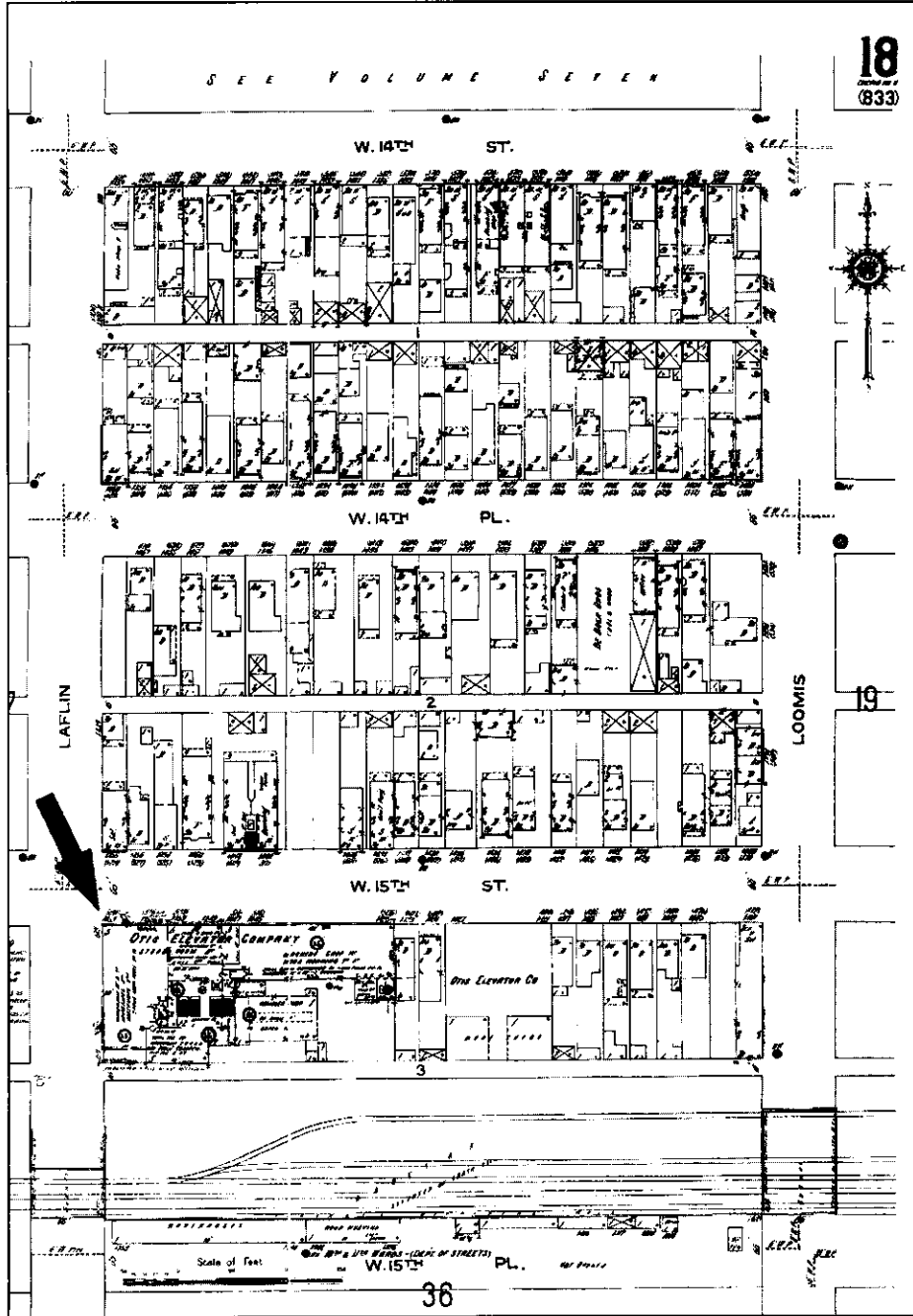


Figure 3: 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

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For Sale—Manufacturing Property
Corner 15th and Laffin Streets
BRICK AND MILL CONSTRUCTED BUILDING

Sections A and B contain 95,000 sq. ft. of floor space. Section C, under construction, will contain 70,000 sq. ft. of floor space.

Sprinkler system, steam heated, adjoins B. & O. Railroad, with switch track, three car capacity, incomplete. Ideal for manufacturing and warehouse purposes.

This property will be sold to the highest bidder on Monday, November 11, at 10:30 o'clock in the forenoon, in the courtroom of Honorable Frank L. Wean, Referee in Bankruptcy, 437 Monadnock Block, Chicago.

For full particulars inquire

CENTRAL TRUST CO. OF ILLINOIS
RECEIVER
RILEY-SCHUBERT-GROSSMAN CO., Bankrupt
1818, 111 W. Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois

Figure 5: Advertisement from *Chicago Daily Tribune* November 3, 1918

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Date Photographs Taken: March 13-17, 2008
Photographer: Elizabeth Breiseth

Photograph Description

1. Northwest corner of West 15th Street and Laflin Avenue (Section A)
2. North Elevation, Looking Southwest (Sections A & B)
3. East Elevation, Looking West (Sections B & C)
4. West Elevation, Looking Southeast (Section A)
5. West Elevation, Looking Northeast (Section A)
6. South Elevation, Looking East (Sections A & C)
7. South Elevation, Looking East (Sections A & C)
8. South Elevation, Looking West (Section C)
9. North Elevation, Looking Southeast (Section B)
10. North Elevation Main Entrance, Looking South (Section B)
11. Roof, Looking West From Section A Towards Section C
12. Interior Courtyard, Looking Northwest
13. Interior Courtyard, Looking Northeast
14. Second Floor Interior, Section A, Looking East
15. Second Floor Interior, Section A, Looking Northwest
16. Third Floor Interior, Section B, Looking Northwest
17. Third Floor Interior, Section C, Looking West
18. Fourth Floor Interior, Section A, Looking Southeast
19. Fourth Floor Interior, Section B, Looking East
20. Fifth Floor Interior, Section A, Looking Southwest
21. Fifth Floor Staircase, Section B

Malawy, Terri

From: Edson_Beall@nps.gov
Sent: Friday, December 05, 2008 2:21 PM
To: WASO_CR_NR-NHL@nps.gov; WASO_CR_HISTORY@nps.gov
Subject: National Register Weekly List 12/05/2008

December 5, 2008

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to send you the following announcements and actions on properties for the National Register of Historic Places. For further information contact Edson Beall via voice (202) 354-2255, or E-mail: <Edson_Beall@nps.gov> This and past Weekly Lists are also available here: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/nrlist.htm>

Our physical location address is:

National Park Service 2280, 8th floor
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW,
Washington D.C. 20005

Please have any Fed Ex, UPS packages sent to the above address. Please continue to use alternate carriers, as all mail delivered to us via United States Postal Service is irradiated and subsequently damaged.

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 11/24/08 THROUGH 11/28/08

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE EQUIVALENT, Strand Theater, 5129-5131 Nannie Helen Burroughs Ave. NE., Washington, DC., 08001093, LISTED, 11/25/08

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE EQUIVALENT, Third Baptist Church, 1546 5th St., NW., Washington, DC., 08001094, LISTED, 11/26/08

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Otis Elevator Company Factory Building, 1435 W. 15th St. and 1501 S. Laflin St., Chicago, 08001097, LISTED, 11/26/08

ILLINOIS, DU PAGE COUNTY, Robbins Park Historic District, Bounded by Chicago Ave., 8th St., County Line Rd., and Garfield St., Hinsdale, 08001098, Listed 11/26/08